

at large upon the Journal, and the veto message and the bill will be printed as a House document.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the message, together with the accompanying bill, be referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

#### HOLOCAUST VICTIMS REDRESS ACT

(Mr. LEACH asked and was given permission to extend his remarks at this point in the RECORD and to include extraneous matter.)

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, the bill would authorize up to \$25 million as a U.S. contribution to organizations serving survivors of the Holocaust living in the United States and an additional \$5 million for archival research by the U.S. Holocaust Museum to assist in the restitution of assets looted or extorted from Holocaust victims. It would also declare that it is the sense of Congress that all governments take appropriate action to ensure that artworks confiscated by the Nazis—or in the aftermath of World War II by the Soviets—be returned to their original owners or their heirs.

The genesis for this proposal dates back to hearings which the Committee on Banking and Financial Services held over the past year, chronicling how the Nazis looted gold from the central banks of Europe, as well as from individual Holocaust victims.

Following World War II, the Tripartite Gold Commission, consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, was created to oversee the recovery and return of Nazi-looted gold to the countries from which it was stolen. Most of the gold recovered during that period was long ago returned to claimant countries. However, a small portion of that gold remains to be distributed. The amount of gold in TGC custody, amount to six metric tons, is worth anywhere from \$50 million to \$70 million depending on the price of gold at a given time. Fifteen nations hold claim to some portion of that gold.

The case for speedy final distribution of the remaining gold pool to Holocaust survivors is compelling. The moral case for such a distribution has been increased by the horrific revelation in the recently released report from Under-Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat that Nazi Germany co-mingled victim gold, taken from the personal property of Holocaust victims, including their dental fillings, with monetary gold, resmelting it into gold bars which the Nazis traded for hard currency to finance the war effort.

This bill would put the Congress on record in strong support of the State Department's appeal to claimant nations to contribute their TGC gold to Holocaust survivors and strengthen the Department's hand in seeking this goal by authorizing the President to commit the United States to a voluntary donation of up to \$25 million for this purpose. A voluntary contribution on our part would go a long way in facilitating a similar gesture of generosity from others who may be claimants of the gold pool or who may have reason to provide redress for actions taken during the dark night of the human soul we call the Holocaust.

A contribution of this nature by the United States would also serve as an act of conscience on the part of this nation. As the bill indicates in the findings, there was an unknown quantity of heirless assets of Holocaust victims in the United States after World War II. A 1941 census of foreign assets in the United States identified \$198 million in German-owned assets in the United States as well as another \$1.2 billion in Swiss assets. Assets inventoried in the census included bank accounts, securities, trusts, and other items. In the years following World War II, Congress recognized that some of these assets held in the United States may have in fact belonged to Jewish victims of the Holocaust who had sent their assets abroad for safekeeping.

Given this circumstance, Congress authorized up to \$3 million in claims for such heirless assets to be awarded to a successor organization to provide relief and rehabilitation for needy survivors. However, the political difficulties associated with such a commitment led Congress ultimately to settle on a \$500,000 contribution. Although the documentary record on asset ownership remains sparse, it is likely that heirless assets in the U.S. were worth much more than the 1962 settlement figure.

A precise accounting of claims will remain unknowable, but the fact that the United States committed itself to such a modest amount in settlement for victim claims provides justification for the United States to make an inflation-adjusted contribution today for victim funds mingled with Nazi assets located in and seized by the United States during the war.

In testimony before our Committee, Under Secretary Eizenstat urged that a better accounting be made for the fate of heirless assets in banks in the United States, and that the issue of World War II-era insurance policies, securities and art work also be examined. To help answer these questions, the legislation would direct \$5 million to the United States Holocaust Museum for archival research to assist in the restitution of assets of all types looted or extorted from Holocaust victims, and activities that would support Holocaust remembrance and education activities.

The second title of the bill deals with Nazi-looted art. A witness at our hearings noted that, 'The twelve years of the Nazi era mark the greatest displacement of art in history.' Under international legal principles dating back to the Hague Convention of 1907, pillaging during war is forbidden as is the seizure of works of art. In defiance of international standards, the Nazis looted valuable works of art from their own citizens and institutions as well as from people and institutions in France and Holland and other occupied countries. This grand theft of art helped the Nazis finance their war. Avarice served as an incentive to genocide with the ultimate in governmental censorship being reflected in the Aryan supremacist notion that certain modern art was degenerate and thus disposable.

The Nazis purged state museums of impressionist, abstract, expressionist, and religious art as well as art they deemed to be politically or racially incorrect. Private Jewish art collections in Germany and Nazi-occupied countries are confiscated while others were extorted from their owners. Still others were exchanged by their owners for exit permits to flee the country. As the Nazis sold works of art for

hard currency to finance the war, many artworks disappeared into the international marketplace. Efforts following the war to return the looted art to original owners were successful to a degree, but to this day many items remain lost to their original owners and heirs.

It is interesting to note that when the French Vichy government tried to object on international legal grounds to Nazi confiscation of art owned by Jewish citizens in France, the Germans responded that such individuals (including those who were sent to concentration camps) had been declared by French authorities no longer to be citizens. Hence, the Nazis claimed that the 1907 Hague Convention, which prohibits the confiscation of assets from citizens in occupied countries, did not apply.

This reasoning cannot be tolerated by civilized people and one purpose of the legislation before us today is to underline that the restitution of these works of art to their rightful owners is required by international law, as spelled out in the 1907 Hague Convention. The return of war booty ought to be a goal of civilized nations even at this late date, long after the end of World War II. For that reason, I have included in the legislation a sense of Congress urging all governments to take appropriate actions to achieve this end.

The Holocaust may have been a war within a war—one fought against defined individuals and civilized values—but it was an integral part of the larger world war among states. Hence, the international principles prohibiting the theft of art and private property during wartime should be applied with equal rigor in instances of genocidal war within a country's borders or conquered territory.

#### FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

S. 1559. An act to provide for the design, construction, furnishing, and equipping of a Center for Historically Black Heritage within Florida A&M University.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1271. An act to authorize the Federal Aviation Administration's research, engineering, and development programs for fiscal years 1998 through 2000, and for other purposes.

#### CONSIDERING AS ADOPTED REMAINING MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES CONSIDERED ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1997

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the House be considered to have adopted a motion to suspend the rules and pass each of the following measures in the form considered by the House on Monday, September 29th, 1997:

S. 1161, to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize appropriations for refugee and entrant assistance for fiscal years 1998 and 1999;